



Overview

Points To Remember About Autoimmune Diseases

- Autoimmune diseases refer to problems with the immune system, which usually fight off viruses, bacteria and infection. The problem causes your immune cells to attack your body by mistake.
- These diseases can affect almost any part of the body.
- In most cases, your doctor will prescribe medications to reduce redness, pain, and swelling.

Your immune system is the network of cells and tissues throughout your body that work together to defend you from viruses, bacteria, and infection. It tries to identify, kill, and eliminate the invaders that might hurt you.

What happens in autoimmune diseases?

Autoimmune diseases refer to problems with the acquired immune system's reactions. Immune cells target the body's own healthy tissues by mistake, signaling the body to attack them.

Autoimmune diseases can affect almost any part of the body, including the:

- Heart.
- Brain.
- Nerves.
- Muscles.
- Skin.
- Eyes.
- Joints.
- Lungs.

- Kidneys.
- Glands.
- Digestive system.
- Blood vessels.

Types

Some examples of autoimmune disease include:

- [Alopecia areata](#).
- Autoimmune hemolytic anemia.
- Autoimmune hepatitis.
- Dermatomyositis.
- Diabetes (type 1).
- Glomerulonephritis.
- Granulomatosis with polyangiitis.
- Graves' disease.
- Guillain-Barré syndrome.
- Idiopathic thrombocytopenic purpura.
- Some forms of [juvenile idiopathic arthritis](#).
- Myasthenia gravis.
- Some forms of myocarditis.
- Multiple sclerosis.
- [Pemphigus/pemphigoid](#).
- Pernicious anemia.
- Polyarteritis nodosa.
- [Polymyositis](#).
- Primary biliary cirrhosis.
- [Psoriasis](#).
- [Rheumatoid arthritis](#).
- [Scleroderma/systemic sclerosis](#).
- [Sjögren's syndrome](#).
- [Systemic lupus erythematosus](#).
- Some forms of thyroiditis.
- Some forms of uveitis.
- [Vitiligo](#).

Symptoms

Most autoimmune diseases cause inflammation, which produces redness, heat, pain, and swelling.

Many autoimmune diseases affect more than one part of the body. The symptoms you have will

depend on the body part(s) affected, such as:

- Joints, which can cause joint pain, stiffness, and loss of function.
- Thyroid, which might cause you to be tired, gain weight, or have muscle aches.
- Skin, which can cause rashes, blisters, and color changes.

Causes

No one is sure what causes autoimmune diseases. In most cases, a combination of factors is probably at work, such as:

- **Genes**, which may make you more likely to develop the disease.
- **Environment**, such as a virus that triggers the disease if you have the gene(s).

Treatment

The treatment depends on the type of autoimmune disease. In most cases, your doctor will prescribe medications such as corticosteroids or immunosuppressive drugs to reduce inflammation.

Research Progress

Researchers continue to explore the genetics and causes of autoimmune disorders. Understanding the causes of these diseases will improve both diagnosis and treatment.

Related Resources

U.S. Food and Drug Administration

Toll free: 888-INFO-FDA (888-463-6332)

Website: <https://www.fda.gov>

Drugs@FDA at <https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/cder/daf>. Drugs@FDA is a searchable catalog of FDA-approved drug products.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics

Website: <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs>

National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases

Website: <https://www.niaid.nih.gov/diseases-conditions/autoimmune-diseases>

American Autoimmune Related Diseases Association

Website: <https://www.aarda.org>

If you need more information about available resources in your language or other languages, please visit our webpages below or contact the NIAMS Information Clearinghouse at NIAMSInfo@mail.nih.gov.

- [Asian Language Health Information](#)
- [Spanish Language Health Information](#)

Join a Clinical Trial

[Find a Clinical Trials](#)

Related Information

[Rheumatoid Arthritis, Handout on Health](#)

[What Is Rheumatoid Arthritis? \(Fast Facts, easy-to-read\)](#)

[¿Qué es la artritis reumatoide? \(Esenciales: Hojas informativas de fácil lectur...](#)

[Scleroderma, Handout on Health](#)

[What Is Scleroderma? \(fast facts, easy-to-read\)](#)

[¿Qué es la esclerodermia? \(Esenciales: hojas informativas de fácil lectura\)](#)

[Questions and Answers about Vitiligo](#)

[What Is Vitiligo? \(fast facts, easy-to-read\)](#)

[¿Que es el vitiligo? \(Esenciales: hojas informativas de fácil lectura\)](#)

[Systemic Lupus Erythematosus, Handout on Health](#)

[Living With Lupus: Health Information Basics for You and Your Family](#)

[What Is Lupus? \(fast facts, easy-to-read\)](#)

[¿Qué es el lupus? \(Esenciales: Hojas informativas de fácil lectura\)](#)

[Alopecia Areata \(fast facts, easy-to-read\)](#)

[¿Qué es la alopecia areata? \(Esenciales: hojas informativas de fácil lectura\)](#)

[Questions and Answers about Pemphigus](#)

[What Is Pemphigus? \(fast facts, easy to read\)](#)

[¿Qué es el pénfigo? \(Esenciales: hojas informativas de fácil lectura\)](#)

[Questions and Answers about Psoriasis](#)

[What Is Psoriasis? \(fast facts, easy-to-read\)](#)

[¿Qué es la psoriasis? \(Esenciales: Hojas informativas de fácil lectura\)](#)

[Questions and Answers about Sjögren's Syndrome](#)

[What Is Sjögren's Syndrome \(fast facts, easy-to-read\)](#)

[¿Qué es el síndrome de Sjögren? \(Esenciales: hojas informativas de fácil lectur...](#)

View/Download/Order Publications

[Autoimmune Diseases, Understanding](#)